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Patterson Demands a Fine that Fits the Crime ***Patterson's bills increase fines and penalties for water polluters***

LANSING – Those who pollute Michigan's water will suffer stiffer penalties with the passage of Senate Bills 46 and 47, announced Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton, 7th District).

"Protecting our environment and natural resources is a priority of mine. We must punish those who violate our pollution laws. Those who defile our public resources will have a higher price to pay," Patterson said. "Dramatically increasing the current fines and increasing enforcement would send a clear message that Michigan does not tolerate unprincipled acts against nature."

Senate Bill 46 would increase the minimum amount of a civil fine for polluting water from \$2,500 to \$5,000 and increase the maximum amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per day of violation. It also increases the maximum prison sentence from two years to four years. Senate Bill 47 would revise the criminal sanctions maximum prison terms in the sentencing to match those proposed by Senate Bill 46.

Senator Patterson is also the sponsor of Senate Bill 568, which would allow the Department of Environmental Quality to pay a reward of up to \$10,000 to a person who provides information that leads to an arrest and conviction of a person who pollutes Michigan water.

The Detroit Riverkeeper and Grosse Ile resident Bob Burns testified in support of the bill. Burns added: "Nonexistent and lax regulations have turned the Detroit River into nothing more than an open sewer and a cheap source for industrial waste disposal. These problems can be traced back to illegal discharge of waste products by unscrupulous individuals. Senator Patterson's legislation would establish a reporting and reward system to facilitate the exposures of these illegal activities."

Punctuating the comments of the Detroit Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Mackinac Chapter Director Anne Woiwode said, "Senator Patterson's bills are critical in adequately addressing those who violate our pollution laws. The current fines were set almost 30 years ago and are ineffective. It's time they are updated."

Senate Bill 46 is tie-barred to Senate Bill 47.

Note: A downloadable photograph of Detroit Riverkeeper Bob Burns testifying before the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee is available on the Senate Photowire, located at <http://senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/>.